

## HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

### Purpose:

To provide safety guidelines for use by personnel when operating with helicopters.

### Guidelines:

- A. Request a helicopter and command structure:
  - 1. Calls for a helicopter will be initiated through the Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC) by the IC or the medic on the primary ambulance.
  - 2. In the event of inclement weather moving into the area, if one service will not fly then do not ask for another agency. **NO HELICOPTER SHOPPING.**
  - 3. After the initial request is made, the IC will take responsibility for the scene and for establishing or tasking someone else to establish a helispot group using proper NIMS terminology.
  - 4. A Helispot will be established through the guidelines in section C of this document and a landing zone officer will be established with channel 4 being the preferred channel for communications.
  - 5. The landing zone officer will communicate with PSCC when the helicopter has landed and when the lift off from the scene.
  - 6. If there are multiple helicopters dispatched to the incident the landing zone officer will have the option of setting up an additional helispot per section C of this document or he/she may advise the helicopter to hover near the scene until the helicopter on the ground lifts off. Communication between the landing zone officer and the helicopters is crucial in this circumstance.
  
- B. Safety:
  - 1. No smoking within 100 feet of the helicopter.
  - 2. Always approach the helicopter from the front and only when a member of the flight crew advises you to do so.
  - 3. Never go near the tail of the helicopter.
  - 4. No running within 100 feet of the helicopter.
  - 5. No vehicles or personnel within 100 feet of the helicopter.
  - 6. Protect eyes from debris, which may be thrown up by the rotorwash.
  - 7. No helmets are to be worn when operating near the helicopter.

- C. Helispot requirements:
1. Minimum of 100 X 100 feet during the day and 120 X 120 feet at night. Landing zone lights should be set at the four corners, with the wind direction light showing where the wind is blowing from.
  2. Maximum 15 to 30 degree slope.
  3. Area must be clear of wires, trees, buildings, poles, emergency vehicles, debris, and other obstacles.
  4. Signs, poles and wires are difficult or impossible to see from the air. If they are at or near the landing zone, this information must be relayed to the pilot prior to landing.
  5. In cases where a highway is the landing zone, traffic should be stopped at least 150 feet away in both directions.
  6. The helicopter will usually try to land into the wind or with no more than 90 degree cross wind.
  7. Vertical take off and landings will not routinely be done. Instead, a slight angle will most probably be used.
- D. Approaching the helicopter:
1. All approaches should be done from the front. Never approach from the rear.
  2. Always wait for a signal from the pilot before approaching the helicopter.
  3. If it becomes necessary to go from one side of the helicopter to the other, always walk around the front. Never walk to the rear, duck under the tail section, or walk around the tail rotor. Always remain clear of the rear area.
  4. Due to the flexibility of the main rotor blades, personnel should approach the helicopter in a crouched stance.
  5. If the helicopter must land on a slope or grade, personnel should approach from the downhill side.
- E. Operating around the helicopter:
1. Personnel should remain away from the helicopter at all times when it is on the ground and the engine is running and should only approach the helicopter when:
    - a. Accompanying a crew member to the aircraft to assist in loading or unloading a patient.
    - b. It is necessary to provide medical assistance to or rescue occupants of the helicopter.
  2. Patients should be kept away from the helicopter until its crew has prepared the aircraft and has evaluated the patient. The crewmember will then supervise the loading of the patient on the aircraft's litter before being placed in the helicopter.
  3. If IV's are carried while loading a patient, they should not be carried so high as to permit them to hit the main rotor blades.
  4. Personnel should not attempt to open or close aircraft doors. If personnel are in the helicopter, they should remain there until a crewmember assists them in exiting the aircraft.